

# Seattle Light Rail Review Panel

## Meeting Notes for May 3, 2000

### Agenda Items

- Briefing on Sound Transit Public Art Program
- Update on Henderson Station Issues

### Commissioners Present

Jon Layzer, Chair  
Matthew Kitchen  
Carolyn Law  
Jay Lazerwitz  
Jack Mackie  
Paul Tomita

### Staff Present

Debora Ashland, Sound Transit  
Marty Curry, Planning Commission  
Barbara Goldstein, Arts Commission  
Lisa Merz, CityDesign

Jon Layzer chaired the meeting. The MLK action item was discussed and the draft will be sent to panel members next week. Panel members will review and make a formal action item at next meeting.

### Briefing on Sound Transit Public Art Program

*Don Corson, Norie Sato, and Tad Savinar, STart Program*

The presentation began with a brief overview of the document titled "*Central Link Light Rail, NE to S. 200<sup>th</sup> Street*". It was emphasized that this document (the 30% document) was intended for internal use only, those within Sound Transit and LRRP only. The specific purpose of the document was to create a nuts and bolts document for Sound Transit. The partner to this document is a set of boards which shows site plans and more specific site station information. It shows atmospheric suggestions about the way we think the art might behave and then an image somehow relating to the spirit of the research that has been done. The approach has been narrowed down but the playing field is still wide open. Flexibility is being practiced but the time frame is still being honored. The next document will be similar to a memo of understanding to specifically state what the projects are and what budgets are. Tad then read the excerpt from the "At 15%" which states:

"At the initial meetings VAT identified a goal to create and identify opportunities for other artists rather than follow more obvious trend of one artist per station model. Furthermore, there was a wish to make the art more visible and recognizable rather than fully integrated and consumed with architecture. Those goals combined with Sound Transit's recognition of artists as "thinkers" have been the starting blocks from which our work has been sprung."

We haven't changed, this is still our intent. In the introduction of our current document, it is stated that this plan reflects an emphasis on :

- Make art visible as landmarks and special experiences within the stations and station areas,
- Continue the exploration to impact on the system some art elements which convey an unique identity and distinguish this light rail system apart from others across the country,
- Encourage strong conceptual and contextual thinking to emerge in the artwork.

A discussion of artwork criteria continued:

- High quality artwork is valued above architectural embellishment with a desire to create distinctive landmarks, objects, or environments. *(Make art more memorable, not just windscreening art. Puts pressure on architectural team to make these good places stand on their own, don't just rely on the art).*
- Art should be a memorable experience within its station setting and draw inspiration from or make reference to the station context. *(How the art serves the immediate community and the region. Want artists to be aware to be responsible to describe how their work grew out of that contextual approach.)*
- All artwork must meet the rigorous demands of transit design. *(Public art is different art than transit art. It should provide a real amenity and hold value for at least 50 years.)*

The artist selection process was then discussed. It is very clear how this will be done. There will be a "short list" of artists, 15 to 20 per station. They will then be sent a description of the project and then would be invited to send materials for review. They will be sending a letter out to the artists explaining how the process will work. Once the 20 or so have been selected, Sound transit, LRRP, and members of the community will help decide which ones will be chosen. The selected artists will make a presentation to Sound Transit first, and then to the community. The contract will provide funding for the artists to make three attempts at their proposal. If Sound transit doesn't concur after the first one, they will be able to make two additional presentations, if need be. These projects will need collaboration from the station architects.

The idea that artworks that have a strong idea or concept behind them was stressed. This should be the primary concern, not how well the integration and collaboration has happened, The goal is to get the best conceptual thinking from artists as possible. The Urban Design guidelines for this region describe the five C's which describe how we live and the program is trying to match that in some way. This area is rich with heritage, inventions and solutions. At the same time, we don't want artists to get sucked up in constant meetings. If there is a fruitful collaboration that takes place, it wouldn't necessarily dictate that direction.

At this point, panel members interjected with questions and comments.

### Discussion

- The Art programs seem two dimensional. At one extreme, artists are given money at the end of the process and a little bit of space to put the art. At the other extreme, art concepts evolve at the same time as architectural design. The stations should embrace architectural style and art simultaneously.
- The tunnel stations for example, there is 400 feet of platform space on the tunnel wall. The art program could work with these spaces.
- The selection process from the existing roster seems like it might have the possibility of making members jaded. Is Sound Transit considering adding someone at the first stage with a fresh eye or are you rejecting that notion. *(It is under our responsibility and we may get additional people who have a fresh eye. We also need someone who understands the station designs.)*
- I question the roster and the fact that it was two years old. *(The roster is constantly being updated and new artists are continually adding their names. There are 500 to 600 artists. There is a website and advertising is being targeted to get the word out.)*

- There is a difference between transit art and public art. How would a local curator have an understanding of transit art. (*The transit art debate has more to do with form, materials, and physical demands. Artwork must be up to physical demands of transit art*).
- What is the protocol regarding the artists? What kind of assistance are you going to give the artists? Merging everything together so that they can do everything you want it to do will be a difficult task, how are you going to accomplish this? (*We would have an orientation and give the artist background on Sound Transit and pass on to them what we have learned. Then, it would be sort of a two tiered system, we would narrow in on specific stations and help them understand more about the stations. It's a lot but as long as you don't have to keep coming back to the artists, it will work. We would like to aspire to the highest possible level of excellence we can get. It was pointed out that Sound Transit would help with the community outreach program*).
- This dialogue should involve the community who will eventually live with the art. There is support to include the community in the selection of the art since the ownership will eventually revert back to them.. The concept of community is difficult to define but nonetheless important. The process could pull out community members and have them review ideas. The process should support the artists.

There was continued discussion regarding the process and opportunities for the artists. Since the artist will end up working on this project for several years, the hope is that the ability of the artist will improve or grow over the time of the project and their will be multiple benefits. The idea that this type of project is not for every artists was discussed. Some artists won't feel compelled to jump through all the hoops but hopefully a large range can be covered. The idea that less experienced artists be paired up with more experienced ones was discussed as a possibility. This may help include some artists who otherwise wouldn't be interested.

The station at 45<sup>th</sup> street was then discussed. Site plans which showed locations for art were shown. Concepts for areas were identified. The total budget is \$400,000. for this station. There are various budgets for each station depending on the space and distinct conditions. It has not been determined the scope of the artists work in the next phase. The possible partnerships, between artists and architects have not yet been identified. There are a few but these will be explored more at a later time. Part of the Art's Commission job is to reinforce and nurture these roles.

The process of matching artists up with their expertise was also discussed. Specific types of artists will match opportunities to suit their styles. The list of ideas is bigger than what the money will cover so some prioritization will need to occur. There are various ways the artist will work so it's difficult to know what exactly to budget for. For example, an artist may create a standalone piece of artwork or work with an engineer to design poles. Part of the art budget may include creating a distinct look for all retaining walls throughout the system. Some parallel projects will work on their own within the system.

It was suggested that the panel review the "15% for Art" document before the next presentation. Next meeting, we will see station by station design. It was clarified that the total art budget is \$7.8 million, with each station designated a certain amount. The panel wondered if there were any guidelines which aided in the decision making process. Sound Transit replied that the station amounts had to do with physical characteristics and needs of the area. The Panel was reminded that the tunnel stations only impact the users versus money spent on station areas which have a larger impact on a bigger audience. System wide funds have to be distributed appropriately and explained in a concise manner.

## Update on Henderson Station: Bus Layover

*Jonathan Jackson, Sound Transit*

*Doug Johnson, KC Metro*

*Jack Latteman, KC Metro*

The update began with an overview of the meetings that have been taken place with the community, property owners, and business owners regarding the new concept of an on-street bus facility. Metro then began an discussion of how routes operate, including termination and the need to park them somewhere until it is time to go into service again. They don't want to create a long block of curb for bus parking so alternatives to that are being explored. This intersection was identified as one with the lowest potential for economic development. There is a possibility that the Filipino Community Center could develop on the SE corner which could serve as an anchor for the area. If community members know that the area is safe and the streets are desirable, more riders will make connections in this area. Metro took another look at the area to see if an on-street bus layover would be successful here. First, if the Filipino community center went in, it would serve as an anchor and bring more people in the area. If Rainier Valley is connected at the south end, this link will also be able to serve the airport. Various areas were discussed along with the pros and cons. The goal is to create a safe atmosphere along with the creation of a major transfer location. Walking distances from the rail to the bus was discussed along with visibility around the intersection of S Henderson and MLK Way. Pedestrian movement will more likely occur around the area if it is safe and there are convenient crossings across MLK Way. It will take about 2 1/2 minutes to get from the rail station to the bus pickup. There is a similar configuration at Othello which works very well.

### Discussion

- What needs to be done in order for this to move forward? *(The City and Panel should look at this proposal in relation to the design of the rail station. Metro and the City will be working together as to who does what and what happens next. LRRP should follow up with Sound Transit regarding how this moves forward in relation to the station design.)*

The meeting adjourned at 6:10 pm.